

IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference 2017 Scholar Report

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Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the IPBA scholarship committee on selecting me as one of the scholars of this prestigious conference.

On the first day morning, we were given a warm welcome by Mr. Jay LeMoine, the Chairman of the IPBA Scholarship Committee and Mr. James Jung, IPBA past scholar.

The day started with the visit to the Auckland High Court. We got a good overview on the legal system and the court structure in New Zealand. One of the important lessons I learnt is about the timeline for hearing cases in New Zealand. I remembered the famous saying “justice delayed is justice denied”. I think New Zealand court system is an exemplary to my country where the maximum timeline for a hearing a case is one year in New Zealand compared to thirty to forty years (approximately, for some cases) in my country. I have emphasized this fact to my colleagues in legal profession in my country after my visit. I was also amazed by the court architecture where we can see the traditional courtroom and the modern state of the art courtroom in the same premises.

We took a break and enjoyed the New Zealand coffee at a coffee shop. Then, we visited Hesketh Henry law firm. Among other things, what made them special is the senior management’s focus on the work life balance of their lawyers. I presume this is something unique compared to other law firms around the world.

In the evening, we met Ms. Rhonda Lundin and the IPBA Secretariat team at SkyCity Auckland Convention Centre. Once again we were given a warm welcome by all of them. We are thankful to IPBA Secretariat team for allocating time to welcome us despite their busy schedule. Also, a special thanks to Ms. Rhonda Lundin for the excellent coordination from the pre-conference stage via prompt email responses.

The reception of the IPBA Scholars was scheduled immediately after the Women Business Lawyer’s Reception. We were presented with a certificate of participation in the Scholarship Program. It was a pleasure to speak to such an elite audience after the awarding of certificates.

As IPBA President noted, why IPBA is different from other professional associations is the quality of welcoming juniors by the seniors. I fully agree with his statement as I experienced this throughout the conference.

On the second day, the Opening Ceremony was well organized. I was inspired by Sir Anand's speech. We understood our role as young lawyers in fighting against corruption through ethics.

As regards the selection of concurrent committee sessions, I spent some time well in advance, to select the perfect sessions based on my interest and relevance to my practice. I would say it was a tough task to select some sessions because two sessions I was interested was parallel scheduled. I have selected following sessions after carefully going through the information provided:

1. Differences between financial investors and strategic investors (Cross-Border Investment)
2. Drafting cross-border contracts (Cross-Border Investment)
3. Developing the international lawyer (Legal Development and Training)
4. Distressed M&A transactions (Cross-Border Investment; Insolvency)
5. Cross border transactions and environmental law compliances and concerns (Cross-Border Investment; Environmental Law)
6. Shareholder agreements (Cross-Border Investment)
7. Exit strategies (Cross-Border Investment)

As my core practice area in Sri Lanka is cross border M&A transaction, the sessions I attended gave me a good insight to my day-to-day work. During sessions, there were comprehensive discussions and extended Q&A sessions on some hot topics. I used Q&A session to clarify most of my queries. Further, the sessions I attended gave me a good understanding on the international developments in M&A practice. For example, it was a very interesting debate in the "*Shareholder agreements (Cross-Border Investment)*" session on the question of including a company as a party to the shareholders agreement. Most of the attendees including myself, thought it was a small legal issue. However, the panelists and audience engaged a lot and shared their own experience in their jurisdictions to arrive at a conclusion.

Overall, I would say it was a privilege to attend the IPBA conference at this younger age. I am extremely thankful to the IPBA scholarship programme and scholarship committee, as we couldn't afford the conference and travelling expense individually without such assistance. I look forward to engage with IPBA more and will try my level best to connect my local Bar members to IPBA.